

THE  
Truth, Certainty, and Simplicity  
OF THE  
Christian Revelation;  
OR,  
REMARKS  
ON

A Phamphlet lately published, intitled,  
*Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul.*

WITH

Some Observations on what the Author of  
some Thoughts concerning the Argument  
*a Priori* has asserted, *That there may be*  
*Eternal Creatures.*

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In a Letter to GILBERT WEST, Esq;

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*"From the arrogant Ignorance of metaphysical Reason-  
ings, aiming at Matters above our Knowledge,  
have flowed some of the greatest Corruptions of the  
evangelical Truth, and the most inveterate Preju-  
dices against it."*

Considerations on the Conversion, p. 106.

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L O N D O N :

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OF THE  
Christian Revolution  
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1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 1, 1861. It is a copy of the original, and is signed by the President.

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THE  
*Truth, Certainty, and Simplicity,*  
OF THE  
Christian Revelation;

S I R.

I Have lately met with a Discourse, intituled, *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*, which, though inscribed to you, is, I find, generally thought to be written by yourself. If I should be mistaken in this, I think you can have no cause to complain of me, that I give Credit to common Fame, and for that Reason send you the following Remarks; as the *Observations* must be acknowledged to be a very ingenious Discourse, and to do Honour to the Author, whoever he be.

The Design of the *Observations* is to prove—  
“ That the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul, duly considered, is, of itself, a Demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine Revelation.”

This, I think, the Author has done, in the clearest and strongest manner.

But his manner of reasoning against the *Deists*, in the Conclusion of his Discourse, is, I think, founded upon some Mistakes; and consequently cannot carry that Conviction along with it, as the Author supposes it to do.

His Reasoning is this.—“ Nor do they, who reject the Christian Religion because of the *Difficulties* which occur in it, consider how far that Objection will go against other Systems, both of Religion and Philosophy, which they themselves profess to admit. There are in *Deism* itself, the most simple of all religious Opinions, several *Difficulties*, for which human Reason can but ill account; which may therefore, not improperly, be stiled Articles of Faith.” *Considerations*, pag. 102.

The Author is here guilty of two Mistakes ; the one—“ That the *Deists* reject the Christian Religion on account of the *Difficulties* which occur in it.” The other—“ That there are in *Deism* several *Difficulties*, for which human Reason can but ill account.”

By *Deists* I understand, as I suppose the Author does, such as profess to believe the Being of a God, and of his Attributes, and the Obligations of natural Religion, but deny the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation.

Now these Men assert—That the New Testament, or Christianity cannot be a Revelation from God, not on this Account.—“ That it contains *Difficulties*, which human Reason can but ill account for ;”—but, “ That it contains Articles of Faith, that is, requiring Men to believe some Things, which are destructive of the *Unity* of God, and consequently contrary to natural Religion.”

Nor do I any where find that these Men allow,—“ That there are any *Difficulties* in *Deism*, for which human Reason can but ill account.”

And



And in this they are certainly in the right. For whatever Doctrines natural Religion teaches, they must be such as are agreeable to Reason, or they could not be discovered by Reason; and if they are agreeable to Reason, the Truth of them may most certainly be proved by Reason.

If this be true, then it is plain that the Consequences which this Author draws from the supposed *Difficulties* in *Deism*,—"That there is the same Reason to reject *Deism*, on account of the *Difficulties* contained in it, as to reject the Christian Religion, on account of the *Difficulties* contained in that,"—not only falls to the Ground, but cannot be urged against the *Deists*, as a Reason to prove their Unreasonableness of their rejecting the Christian Religion.

I am far from denying,—That there are *Difficulties* in the Christian Religion; that is, That some Things are revealed in the Gospel, which are not only above human Capacity to comprehend, but are, not improbable, incomprehensible to the highest Angels; as I shall shew presently.

But it is not upon this Account that these Men reject Christianity, that there are such *Difficulties* in it; but it is, That the *Explanations* of them, which are given by some Christian Writers, seem to these *Deists* to be inconsistent with the *Unity* of God, and consequently contrary to natural Religion.

The Truth is,—That these *Deists* never look into the New Testament, to inform themselves whether there be any such *Difficulties* contained in it; which if they did with any Intention and Impartiality, they never could reject Christianity

Christianity on account of those *Difficulties*; because they would find, that though they are above our Comprehension, or impossible to be *explained*, yet they contain nothing that is inconsistent with the *Unity* of God, and consequently contrary to natural Religion.

But they argue from the *Explanations* which are given of those *Difficulties*,—That those *Difficulties* do, in themselves, contain Doctrines inconsistent with the *Unity* of God, consequently contrary to natural Religion. And this is the true Reason why they reject the Christian Religion. But it is such a Reason as is very weak and absurd, and what will not justify them in their Infidelity, because they must know,—That they ought themselves to search the Scriptures, to see whether these Things are so.

It ought likewise to be observed,—That there are other sorts of *Deists*. But these are such as exercise their low Wit in turning the Scripture into ridicule. Among the foremost of such may be justly ranked Mr. *Thomas Chubb*, as may be seen from his *Posthumous*, and the most *infamous* of all his Works. But it may, without Breach of Charity, be said of all such, and is indeed what ought to be said of them, to make others ashamed to follow their Example,—That they must be Men of most profligate and vicious Lives.

Christianity deserves the most serious Consideration of all Men for these Reasons;—That those Books, in which it is contained, are attested to have been written by those inspired Writers, whose Names they bear, not upon the Authority of any particular Teachers, but upon the agreeing Evidence of Friends and Enemies  
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of all sorts, of Christians of different Opinions, and of Jews and Heathens; the Books having been cited by innumerable opposite Writers in all Ages, and in different Languages, and dispersed both in the Original, and in numerous agreeing Translations, through all Centuries, from the Beginning;—and for this other Reason,—That they contain the History of a Person, who declared himself to be sent by God into the World, and who proved his Mission by numberless Miracles, and likewise declared, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

And I have so much Charity as to believe,—That there may be some *few* Men, who lead good moral Lives, and who do not believe the Truth of Christianity, purely upon this Account,—That they are persuaded from the *Explanations* which are given of those *Difficulties*, which are to be found in the Gospel, that Christianity teaches Doctrines, that are in themselves inconsistent with the *Unity* of God, and consequently contrary to natural Religion.

These are the only *Deists* that are fit or deserve to be argued with. And the only way to convince such of the Truth and Certainty of Christianity, is to let them see, that nothing is revealed in the Gospel, and consequently required of Men to believe, but what is perfectly consistent with the *Unity* of God, and with natural Religion in all its Doctrines.

But alas! there are *few* such *Deists* to be found. The generality, by their trivial and vain Cavils, their mocking and ridiculing, without and before Examination, their directing the whole Stress of their Objections against  
particular

particular Customs, or particular and perhaps uncertain Opinions, or Explications of Opinions, without at all considering the main Body of Religion, their loose, vain, and frothy Discourses; and above all, their vicious and immoral Lives, shew plainly and undeniably, that they are not really *Deists*, but downright *Atheists*.

What I propose therefore in the following Discourse, is to shew these two Things.

1. That those supposed *Difficulties* in natural Religion, which the Author of the *Considerations* mentions, are really no *Difficulties*, but are what human Reason can fairly account for.

2. That those *Difficulties*, which are to be found in Christianity, though they could not have been known, had they not been revealed, and are in their own Nature above our Comprehension, and not improbable, incomprehensible to the highest Angels; yet this human Reason can demonstrate that they contain nothing unworthy of God, or that destroys any one of his Attributes, and consequently are perfectly consistent with, and agreeable to natural Religion.

The first of these *Difficulties* which this Author affirms to be in *Deism*, or natural Religion, is,—The Origin of Evil, under the Government of an All-good and All-powerful God.

Now if it be true that God has created Man a free Agent, and that he has endowed him with Faculties to know Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, the necessary Consequence of this must be,—That Man has it absolutely in his  
Power



Power to chuse Good or Evil, Virtue or Vice. And therefore the Cause and Original of Evil must be Man's Free-will, or his natural Power and Liberty to chuse Good or Evil.

Indeed if Man be not a free Agent, but his Actions are controuled and determined by some superior Power, so that it is not possible for him to act otherwise than according to the Determination of that superior Power, then it is plain, that the Will or Determination of that superior Power, which lays a Man under a Necessity of committing Evil, is the true Cause and Original of Evil.

And therefore the only *Difficulty*, if it can be called a *Difficulty*, is, what this Author mentions in the second Place,—“ How Free-will in Man is to be reconciled with the Prescience of God;” or, in other Words, How to reconcile it, that God's Fore-knowledge of Man's Actions, does not determine his Actions, so as to make it impossible for him to have acted otherwise.

No Man is so weak or absurd as to affirm,—That such a Thing exists, or such an Action is done, because he sees that Thing to exist, or that Action to be done; for the Thing would exist, and the Action be done the very same, if he did not see either of them.

In like manner some Things will exist, and some Actions will be done hereafter; though a Man does not foresee that such Things will exist, or that such Actions will be done.

But as it cannot be denied,—That God may, if he pleases, communicate to Man a Power of foreseeing that those Things will exist, and  
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those Actions be done hereafter ; so no Man will be so weak as to affirm,—That these Things will exist, and these Actions will be done, because Man foresees both ; when it is supposed,—That those Things will exist, and those Actions will be done, had not God empowered him to foresee either of them.

If then Fore-knowledge in Man, which may be communicated to him by God, would not determine the Existence of any Things, or the doing of any Actions hereafter, but these Things would have existed, and these Actions have been done, if Man had not, by that Power communicated to him by God, foreseen both ; then it is plain,—That Fore-knowledge in God, which is an essential Power or Attribute of God, is not the Cause that such Things will exist, or such Actions be done hereafter ; for the Power of Fore-knowledge is, in this Case, the same in Man as in God ; and consequently the Effects of that Power must be the same in God as in Man ; that is, if Man's Fore-knowledge is not the Cause of Things existing, or of Actions being done, neither is God's Fore-knowledge the Cause of either.

These Things are so plain, that I am surprised how any Man can call them *Difficulties*, for which human Reason can but ill account. Men may, and do, of which many Instances might be given, confound the plainest Truths by the Help of metaphysical Distinctions, and the Use of Words without Meaning ; and so it is in the present Case. But the Light of the Sun, at Noon-day, is not more evident and certain than this is ;—That there is not the least Connection between my doing such or such Actions,  
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and God's Fore-knowledge that I shall do those Actions. I resolve to do such a Thing To-morrow, and before the Time comes I alter my Resolution, and act just the contrary. God sees and knows my Resolution To-day, to do such a Thing To-morrow ; (for though we call it *Fore-knowledge* in God, it is really the same as *Knowledge* is in us ; ) and he sees and knows that I shall alter my Resolution before To-morrow, and act quite otherwise. Suppose now that it were possible that God should not know this, should not I act just the same. No Man can be so absurd as to deny this. How then can it be said,—That God's knowing of this is the Cause of my acting in that manner. If there be a God, he must of Necessity be infinite in Power and Knowledge. And how can he be said to be infinite in Knowledge, if he does not know all Things, not only all our past and present Actions, but all our future Actions, and the very Thoughts of our Heart. So that neither is God's infinite Knowledge the Cause of my Thoughts or Actions, nor are my Thoughts or Actions, properly and strictly speaking, the Cause of God's infinite Knowledge. They are both absolutely *independent* of each other, and have not the least *Connection* with, or *Influence* the one over the other.

Besides this, every intelligent Agent must of necessity be a Free-agent, as every Free-agent must of necessity be an intelligent Agent ; not only the Knowledge but the Actions of every intelligent Being are absolutely his own. Nor is it any Diminution of the Omnipotency of God to affirm,—That God cannot, unless he changes that Nature of Man, in which he has

created him, restrain him from chusing Good or Evil. Nor can any thing be more for the Glory of God than this is,—That all intelligent Beings are Free-agents;—That Men and Angels obey the Will of God, and offer up Prayers and Praises to him, not as God necessarily and absolutely compels them to do it, but as it is their own free Choice.

I cannot but be greatly surprized at what this *Writer* says here concerning Mr. *Locke*,—“ That Mr. *Locke*, after much Thought concerning the reconciling the Prescience of God with the Free-will of Man, fairly confessed he could not do it; and what Mr. *Locke* could not do, in reasoning upon Subjects of a metaphysical Nature, I am apt to think few Men, if any, can hope to perform.” *Considerations*, &c. pag. 102. 103.

And is it possible he can say this, and have read the Works of that incomparable Man Dr. *Samuel Clarke*; or that just Account which that fine Writer, the present Bishop of *Winchester*, has given of the Life, Writings, and Character of that great and good Man?

“ As much (says this *excellent Prelate*) as I have said already of his (Dr. *Clarke*’s) Excellencies in Learning, there is still one behind, which was (I had almost said) strictly peculiar to him; I mean the manner of his handling Subjects of a metaphysical and abstract Nature. In this Skill he had a Superiority so visible, that I think the greatest Masters of it ought to yield it up to him.” *Preface to Dr. Clarke’s Works*, pag. 11.

To illustrate the Truth of which, his *Lordship* refers his Readers to those three Works of  
Dr.



Dr. Clarke's,—His *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*;—The *Letters that passed between the Doctor and Mr. Anthony Collins, upon the Immateriality of the Soul, and the Liberty of human Actions*;—and, That remarkable *Controversy between the Doctor and the learned Mr. Leibnitz, upon the important and difficult Subjects of Liberty and Necessity*.

Mr. Locke was certainly a very great and good Man, and had made not only Philosophy, but Divinity very much his Study, as appears from his fine *Essay on human Understanding*, and his excellent *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles*; and it must be confessed, that few were equal to him in reasoning upon Subjects of a metaphysical Nature.

But as his *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles* plainly shew that he was greatly mistaken in some of the essential Doctrines of Christianity, so his *Essay on human Understanding* is a plain Proof that he was no less mistaken in his reasoning upon a very remarkable Subject of a metaphysical Nature, the possibility of Matters being capable of Thought.

If this Writer has never looked into those Works of Dr. Clarke, which I have quoted above, it must be strange indeed; and if he has read them with the least Attention and Impartiality, it must, if possible be more strange, that he should not see how greatly superior Dr. Clarke was to Mr. Locke, in reasoning upon Subjects of a metaphysical and abstract Nature; and with what unanswerable Strength of Reason he has demonstrated,—The absolute Impossibility of Matter's being capable of Thought, or the Immateriality of the Soul;—The absolute Liberty  
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and Freedom of Mens Actions, and the Consistency of that Freedom with the Prescience of God ;—and in consequence of that,—The Cause and Origin of Evil ;—for if Evil be a Man's own free Choice, he alone must be the Cause and Author of Evil.

The other *Difficulty* which this Author mentions is not, (as I suppose he means) properly speaking, a *Difficulty* in natural Religion, but in Philosophy ;—“ That it is difficult to comprehend how God has exerted his Power of Creation from all Eternity ; or, in other Words, —“ That it is equally hard to admit God to have exerted his Power of Creation within some limited definite Time only, as it is to admit that he has exerted that Power from all Eternity.” *Ibid.* pag. 103. &c.

I have varied something from the Author's Words, but this I apprehend takes in the Whole of what he intends.

Now in this I confess I see not the least Difficulty in comprehending how God has exerted his Power of Creation from all Eternity. And, indeed, if this be not admitted, it must run into the greatest Absurdity and Impiety. Will any Man presume to assert, that there was a Time when God could not exert his Power of Creation ? Is not this to limit the Power and Goodness of God ? For my Part I am so far from having the least Doubt, that God has exerted his Power of creating Worlds, to manifest his infinite Power, and of creating an infinite Number of intelligent Beings, of infinite Orders and Degrees, to manifest his infinite Goodness, in making them Partakers of his own Happiness, that I think it is what every  
good

good Man must believe. I do not presume to affirm that this must be so, but this I may safely affirm, that it not only manifests the infinite Power and Goodness of God, but that it is highly *probable*, and most certainly *possible*. And whoever denies the Possibility of it, he must affirm, that there necessarily must have been an Eternity before God created any thing, which surely no Man will presume to do.

And as to the *Possibility* of it, it is plain from hence,—That since the Attributes and Powers of God are evidently as Eternal as his Being, and there never was any time wherein God could not will what he pleased, and do what he willed; and since it is just as easy to conceive God always acting as always existing, and operating from all Eternity as well as decreeing from all Eternity, it will not at all follow that that which is an Effect of his Will and Power, must for that Reason necessarily be limited to any definite Time.

The *Difficulty* which this Author seems to think there is in supposing God to have created Worlds, and intelligent Beings from all Eternity, is this,—That it follows from thence, that there must be Worlds and intelligent Beings, which have existed with God from all Eternity. But this does by no means follow. For if you suppose Millions of Millions of Ages to have passed since any particular World or intelligent Being was created, there must still have been an Eternity before either of them was created.

That *Space* is infinite is most certain, for this plain Reason,—That if you suppose a Cannon-ball to ascend (if I may so speak) with never  
such

such Force or Swiftneſs, for Millions of Millions of Ages, and at length to meet with ſomething that ſtops it, there muſt be Space beyond that which ſtops it, and conſequently Space muſt be infinite, or have no End. And it is juſt as eaſy to conceive an infinite Number of Worlds, and of intelligent Beings, exiſting in infinite Space, as it is to conceive Space to be infinite, or to have no End.

The ingenious Author of a late Pamphlet, intituled,—*Some Thoughts concerning the Argument a Priori*, &c. has one Section to prove,—“ That there may be ſuch a thing as an eternal Effect.” pag. 14. &c.

This I readily grant. I do likewise agree with him,—“ That there never was a Time, or any Portion of Duration when God could not have brought ſomething into Being, or cauſed that to be which otherwiſe would not have been;—or, “ That there never was a Time when God had not the Power of creating, and therefore he may, for ought we know, have exerted it from all Eternity.”

But this will not prove what this Author affirms, pag. 49.—“ That there might have been, and are, for ought we know, eternal Creatures.”

For if it be true that God has exerted his Power of Creation from all Eternity, this only proves,—That there has been an *eternal Succeſſion* of Creatures, which neceſſarily ſuppoſes,—That there muſt have been an Eternity before any one of them was created.

But ſays this *Writer*,—“ If we ſay, that whatever God has cauſed to be muſt have had a Beginning, we muſt affirm, that there was Duration without



without Beginning, in which God *could not* have caused any thing to be ; for take what Portion of Time or Duration you will, there was Duration without Beginning before it." pag. 18.

But this Reasoning is by no means just. For if it be true,—“ That whatever God has caused to be must have had a Beginning ; ”—this does not prove,—“ That there must have been a Duration without Beginning, in which God *could not* have caused any thing to be.”—For God may have caused Things to be from all Eternity, by an *eternal Succession*.

I do not affirm,—“ That whatever God has caused to be must have had a Beginning ; ”—But if this were true, it would not follow,—“ That there must have been an eternal Duration, in which God could not have caused any thing to be.”

This Writer, throughout this whole Section, seems to take it for granted, or a thing certain,—That all Things derive their Being from God in the *same* manner. It is not indeed possible for human Reason to discover it to be otherwise. But surely Revelation teaches another Doctrine.

The *New Testament* contains a Revelation of two divine Persons called *the Son*, and *the holy Spirit* of God. And concerning the *Son* it declares,—That he is the *only Begotten* of the Father ;—and concerning the *holy Spirit*,—That he *proceeds* from the Father ; and concerning all other Beings it declares,—That they were *created* by the Son.

Hence it is plain,—That as the *Son* derives his Being from the *Father* in a peculiar manner, so as to be distinguished from all other Beings whatsoever ;—so the *holy Spirit* derives his Being

from God, so as to be distinguished from the *Son*, and from all *created* Beings.

Now if it be true,—That God gave his *Son* Power and Authority to create all Things. And if it be fit and reasonable to believe,—That the *Son* has exercised this Power from all Eternity ; —This proves what Reason could not possibly discover, not only,—“ That there *may* be such a Thing as an eternal Effect, but that there *certainly* is such a Thing. For in this Case the *Son* must have been *co-eternal* with God his *Father*, deriving his Being from God from all Eternity, by the eternal and incomprehensible Power and Will of God his Father.

But surely it must be great Presumption to affirm, as this *Writer* does,—“ That there might have been, and are, for ought we know, *eternal Creatures* ;—which is the same as to affirm,—That there is no *Difference* between *Only-begotten*, —and *Created*.

I entirely agree with this ingenious *Writer*,—That the Arguments which are brought to prove, that it is not possible there can be eternal Creatures, are very weak and absurd.—But I cannot see how it is possible to reconcile it with the Account which the New Testament gives of the Creation of all Things, to suppose,—“ That there might have been, and are, for ought we know *eternal Creatures*.”

With respect to the Possibility,—That God may have caused something to have been from all Eternity ;—or, “ That there may be such a Thing as an eternal Effect ;—this *Writer* has, I think, plainly demonstrated it.

“ If (says he) we allow there always was a Being of infinite Wisdom and Power, we must, if we  
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are at all consistent with ourselves, allow that Being could have acted, or have caused something to have been from all Eternity. Nor will the Difficulty or Impossibility of conceiving an eternal Cause, or an eternal Effect, stint the Power of the Almighty, or make it impossible for him to have done what we in effect own he could have done, when we own that he is without Beginning, and that his Power and Wisdom are eternal and infinite, namely, to have caused something from Eternity. It would be as fair and as just to say there is no such thing as Eternity or Infinity, because we fall short in our Ideas of these Things, and are apt to think of Bounds and Limits from being generally conversant with limited Things ; I say it would be as just and reasonable to deny there is any such thing as Eternity or Infinity, for want of a full and adequate Idea of these Things, as it is to say, it is impossible for any thing to be caused or effected from Eternity, because we cannot perfectly conceive how such a thing can be. And are we able to conceive Creation, or how any thing can be brought into Being, or made to exist which once did not exist ? And is not this as difficult to conceive, as the causing something from all Eternity ? What has been caused, produced, or created from Eternity, (if there be any such thing) is as much dependent upon the Creator, as any thing produced in time. And the Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness of the supreme Being, must appear at least as much in such a Production, as in one that had a Beginning ; one would think much more, since the doing a thing we can but just perceive to be possible, seems greater than the doing what



appears easier and more familiar to our Thought and Imagination." *Ibid.* pag. 19, 20.

All this I allow to be true. But I think this *Writer* is not justified in applying it to Things that are *created*.

Things may, and I verily believe have been created from all Eternity, for the Manifestation of the Glory and Goodness of God. But I cannot believe that any thing that is created, has existed from all Eternity; because it appears to me to be evidently inconsistent with the Scripture Account of the Creation of all Things.

There is one self-existent Being or Substance, and there neither is, nor can be any other but he. This is the Voice, not only of natural Religion, but of all Revelation. He, and he alone, must of *necessity* have existed from all Eternity, and consequently *Necessity* is the *Cause* of his Existence. But though he alone exists necessarily and of himself, yet it may be true that some Being may have existed with him from all Eternity, not by necessity of Nature, but by the eternal and incomprehensible Power and Will of him who alone is the Self-existent Substance. But whether there be any such Person or Being, Reason leaves us quite in the Dark. And therefore if Men will reason about it, they ought to examine whether Revelation gives us any Light into this Matter.

In the *New Testament* we find mention made of a divine Person, who is called, *The only Begotten Son of God*; and of him it is declared,—That he existed with the Father from the Beginning, and before all Worlds. As the Scripture, in this Description of this divine Person, does not expressly declare,—That he existed with the  
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Father from all Eternity; so neither does this Description exclude him from having existed with God from all Eternity.

But since he is declared to be the *only Begotten Son* of God, and to have had Glory with God before the World was, and since it is no where said of any Being that was *made* or *created*,—That such Being existed with God from the Beginning, and before all Worlds;—we cannot, I think, be warranted from Scripture to affirm,—“That there might have been, and probably are *Creatures* that have existed with God from all Eternity”.

Upon the whole,—I am so far from denying,—“That there may be such a thing as an *eternal Effect*,”—or, in other Words,—That there may be a *Person* who has existed with God from all Eternity;—That I am verily persuaded from what the Scriptures has declared concerning the *only Begotten Son* of God,—That he is that Person.

I am likewise so far from denying,—“That God may have exerted his Power of Creation from all Eternity,”—That I do verily believe he has, for the Manifestation of his infinite Glory and Goodness, created Worlds and intelligent Beings from all Eternity, by an *eternal Succession*,—So that though there never was a Time when Worlds, and intelligent Beings did not exist, yet it cannot be said,—That any of them have existed from all Eternity.

And in the last Place; though I am far from denying,—That there might have been, if God had so pleased, *eternal Creatures*; yet I cannot say,—“That there are, *for ought we know*, *eternal Creatures*,”—because this is to speak as  
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if the *New Testament* had never been written ; for the *New Testament*, by declaring the *Son* to be the *only Begotten* of the *Father*, and that God created all Things by him, does, I think, plainly intend to teach us,—That he *only* has existed with God from all Eternity ;—and that God has by him created Worlds, and intelligent Beings, by an *eternal Succession* from all Eternity.

I come now in the second Place to shew,—That those *Difficulties* which are to be found in Christianity, though they could not have been known had they not been revealed, and are in their Nature above our Comprehension, and not improbably incomprehensible to the highest Angels, yet this Reason can demonstrate that they contain nothing unworthy of God, or that destroys any one of his Attributes, and consequently are perfectly consistent with, and agreeable to natural Religion.

Christianity is (as I observed before) a Revelation of two divine Persons, called the *Son* and the *holy Spirit* of God, who could not have been known, had they not been revealed. But since it is revealed that there are two such divine Persons, no Man can deny the Truth of it, without denying the divine Authority of the *New Testament*.

But now some Things may be revealed concerning these two divine Persons, which human Reason, so far from being able to account for, or to explain, cannot possibly have any Idea of. Such is the Declaration which the Scripture makes concerning the *Son*,—That he is the *only Begotten* of the *Father* ;—and concerning the *holy Spirit*,—That he *proceeds* from the *Father*.

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All that we can with any Certainty conclude from hence is this,—That the *Son* being said to be the *only Begotten* of the *Father*, necessarily implies,—That he derives his Being from God in a peculiar manner, so as to be distinguished from all other Beings whatsoever ;—and, That the *holy Spirit* being said to *proceed* from the *Father*, necessarily implies,—That he derives his Being from the *Father* in a peculiar Manner, so as to be distinguished from the *Son*, and from all *created* Beings.

So far may easily be understood by all Men. But *how* the Son is the only Begotten of the Father,—or how the holy Spirit proceeds from the Father,—these are *Difficulties* absolutely beyond our Comprehension.

But then they are such as imply no Contradiction, nor are in the least contrary to natural Religion, and therefore cannot, and indeed are not urged by *Deists* as Arguments against the Truth of the Christian Revelation.

It is the different *Explanations* which have been given of these *Difficulties*, and the affirming those *Explanations* to be the *Doctrines* of Christianity, that have given the *Deists* occasion to object to Christianity itself,—That it teaches Doctrines that are contrary to natural Religion, and consequently impossible to be true ; and to infer from thence,—That Christianity is a mere Forgery.

And this they do without ever looking into the Revelation itself, to know whether it really teaches such Doctrines as they affirm to be contrary to natural Religion ; which is very unfair, and renders them utterly inexcusable.

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The Scripture has no where distinctly declared, —*how*, or in what manner, the Son is the only Begotten of the Father, or the holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and therefore Men ought not to presume to be able to define. And had Men done this, had they taken Care *there to stop* where the Scripture itself has *stopped*, without presuming to go farther at all, the Consequences would have been, — That none of those Disputes could ever have happened among Christians, which have given wicked and profane Men occasion to scoff at, and ridicule Christianity, and have afforded *Deists*, and all other *Infidels*, a Pretence to deny the Truth and Certainty of it.

I am sensible it will be asked here, — To what Purpose are these Things revealed concerning the Son and holy Spirit, if they are above our Comprehension, and we are not to endeavour to explain and understand them?

To this I answer, first in the general, — That there are none of the Doctrines of our Saviour calculated for the gratification of Mens idle Curiosities, the busying and amusing them with airy and useless Speculations, much less are they intended for an Exercise of our Credulity, or a Tryal how far we can bring our Reason to submit to our Faith; but they have all of them an immediate Relation to Practice, to hinder us from being workers of Iniquity, and make us like unto God.

To apply this to what the Scripture has revealed concerning the Son and the holy Spirit, no Man will deny that the Reason why our Saviour has declared concerning himself, or the Son, that he is the *only Begotten* of the Father, and



and concerning the holy Spirit, that he *proceeds* from the Father,—is to make us sensible of how *great Dignity* these two divine Persons are, and to engage us to love and fear God, and his Son, and his holy Spirit, when we consider what great Things they have done for us, and how they have loved us ;—That God so loved the World that he sent his beloved Son out of his Bosom, to lay down his Life for us :—That his Son was willing to leave that Glory which he had with God, and to humble himself to be born of a Woman, and to be united to a human Body, that he might lay down his Life for us, by suffering the most cruel and ignominious Death ;—and that his holy Spirit is sent, in an invisible Manner, to be the Sanctifier of our Hearts, and our Supporter and Comforter under all Difficulties.

If this will not engage Men to fear and love God, and his Son, and his holy Spirit, neither would it if our Saviour had *explained* to us, *how* the Son is the *only Begotten* of the Father, and how the holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father ; for we have the same Assurance of their great Dignity, as if we understood these Things.

God has promised to all good Men in another Life, such a Reward as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard ; neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive. And ought not the Promise and Assurance of so glorious a Reward, be the *same* Motive to engage us to obey the Will of God, as if it had been *explained* to us, wherein this future Reward and Happiness consist ?

No Man can be so weak and absurd as to deny this. And we see all good Men are

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content to rely upon the Promise of God, and no angry Disputes and Contentions have arisen among Christians concerning the Nature of the Happiness of Heaven.

And is there not at least the same Reason that Men should acquiesce in what God has thought fit to reveal concerning his Son and his holy Spirit ? Is it not sufficient to all the Ends and Purposes of Religion, of leading pure and holy Lives, to know, that two such glorious Beings, as the Son and the holy Spirit of God, have interested themselves so much to make us eternally happy ? No Man can deny this : And yet we will not be satisfied with the Assurances which the Scripture gives us of the great Dignity of these two divine Persons, unless we know wherein their Dignity consists.

The Scripture has declared how mighty a Being God is, not with an Intention that Men should presume to enquire into his Nature and Essence, but that when they consider how wonderful a Being he must be, they should be convinced what great Influence this ought to have over all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions.

This, and this alone is the Reason why the Scripture speaks such great and incomprehensible Things of God, of his Son, and of his holy Spirit, to engage us to love them, and to make us fear and tremble to disobey them. And it is most astonishing all Men should not see this, and acquiesce in it.

It is a just and a wise Remark which the Author of the Observations, &c. makes,—“ That from the arrogant Ignorance of metaphysical Reasonings, aiming at Matters above our Knowledge, have flowed some of the greatest Corruptions

ruptions of the evangelical Truth, and the most inveterate Prejudices against it." pag. 106.

It is indeed too melancholy a Truth,—That from Mens vain and presumptuous Endeavours to *explain* the incomprehensible Dignity of those two divine Persons, the Son and the holy Spirit of God, have flowed some of the greatest Corruptions of the most plain, and simple, and essential Doctrines of Christianity; and that from the *Explanation* of these Doctrines, and not from the *Doctrines themselves*, have arisen the Prejudices of Infidels of all Sorts against Christianity.

To this Purpose it is well said by the Excellent Mr. *Hales* in his Tract of Schism,—“ It hath been (says he) the common Disease of Christians from the Beginning, not to content themselves with that Measure of Faith which God and the Scripture have expressly afforded us; but out of a vain Desire to know more than is revealed, they have attempted to discuss Things, of which we can have no Light, neither from Reason nor Revelation. Hence arose those antient and many Divisions and Contentions among Christians, occasioned by *Arianism*, *Eutychianism*, *Nestorianism*, *Photinianism*, *Sabellianism*, and many more, both antient and in our own Time.”

Whereas on the contrary, had Men been contented with what the Scripture, which is the Rule and only Rule of Faith in Matters of Religion, has expressly declared concerning the Son and holy Spirit, and not attempted to *explain* what are the *only Difficulties* in Christianity,—*how* the Son is the *only Begotten* of the Father, and *how* the holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Fa-

ther;—the greatest Part of the Errors, at least the greatest Part of the uncharitable Divisions that have happened among Christians, and the inveterate Prejudices which Infidels of all Sorts have conceived against Christianity, *purely* on account of the *Explanations* which have been given of these Things, might in all probability have been prevented, and the *Simplicity* of the Christian *Faith* and *Worship* have been preserved.

Upon the Whole, I cannot say with this Writer,—“ That the glorious Light of the Gospel is (in Scripture) sometimes overcast with Clouds of Doubt.”—The glorious Light of the Gospel is this;—That God so loved the World, that he gave his only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

Is there the least Difficulty in understanding this? Or can this be said to be over-cast with Clouds of Doubt, as it is revealed in Scripture? God forbid.

Though it be true that we cannot comprehend *how* this glorious Person is *begotten* of the Father, it is sufficient for all the Ends and Purposes of Religion to know, that there is such a *Person*, and that he, *himself*, in his *own Person*, laid down his Life a Ransom and a Sacrifice for sinful Men.

Vain Men have indeed, by the arrogant Ignorance of metaphysical Reasonings, involved this plain Truth in Clouds of Doubt, and rendered it utterly unintelligible according to their *Explanations*,—*who* the Person was that God sent into the World to redeem us by his own Blood.

It is well said in the Book of *Job*,—Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find



find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as Heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Hell, what canst thou know?—The same ought every Christian to ask himself concerning the Son and holy Spirit of God.—Canst thou by searching find out the Son and holy Spirit of God? Canst thou find out those glorious Beings to perfection?

All that God requires of us is,—to consider in earnest,—what a *mighty Being* he is,—and what *glorious Beings* his Son and holy Spirit are,—and what great and wonderful *Things* they have done for us. And if this will not engage us to fear and love them, neither would it though we could fully comprehend their *Nature* and *Essence*.

As the *only Difficulty* in natural Religion is to comprehend and explain the proper metaphysical Nature, Essence, and Substance of the one supreme Being, even the Father, so the *only Difficulties* in Christianity or revealed Religion, are to comprehend and explain the proper metaphysical Nature, Essence, and Substance of the Son and holy Spirit; or *how* the Son is the *only Begotten* of the Father, and *how* the holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father.

And as these are *Difficulties* which the Scripture has no where at all *explained*, therefore Men ought not to presume to be able to *explain* them.

If this be true that these are the *only Difficulties* in Christianity, (and I believe it will not be easy for this Writer to shew there are any *other*) I see no Reason he has to call *Deism* the most *simple* of all religious Opinions.

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Our Saviour, who best knew what true Christianity is, tells his Disciples,—Ye believe in God, believe also in me. Agreeably to what he says in that remarkable Prayer to God before his Death,—This is Life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. And agreeably to those Words of *St. Paul*,—There is none other God but one. For though there be that are called Gods, whether in Heaven or in Earth, (as there be Gods many, and Lords many) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all Things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all Things, and we by him.

There is none other God but one, or none other but one is God. For though there be that are called—Gods many, and Lords many,—to us there is but one God, the Father, or to us one is God, even the Father, of whom are all Things, and we in him; and one Lord, or one is Lord, *viz.* Jesus Christ, by whom are all Things, and we by him. That is,—There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Man; one God, who created all Things by Jesus Christ, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom God created all Things.

Though there be Gods many, saith *Mr. Mede*, (that is, many celestial and sovereign Deities) and Lords many, (that is, many Baalims, Lords-agents, and Presidents of earthly Things) yet to us Christians there is but *one* sovereign God, the Father, of whom are all Things, and we to him, (that is, to whom as Supreme we are to direct all our Prayers) and but *one* Lord Jesus Christ, one Lord-agent, (instead of their many Baalims, and Dæmon-mediators) by whom are

all Things which come from the Father to us, and through whom alone we find Access unto him. The Allusion, methinks, is passing elegant, and such as cannot (I think) be well understood without this Distinction of superior and inferior Deities in the Divinity of the *Gentiles*; they having a *Plurality* in both sorts, and we but *one* in each, as our Apostle affirmeth." *Mede's Discourse on 2 Pet. ii. 1.*

Such is the *Simplicity* of the Christian Religion, such the glorious *Light* of the Gospel, which all Men may easily and fully comprehend, and which it is most astonishing all Men should not see and believe, who read the New Testament with any *Attention*, and free from all *Prejudice* and *Prepossession*.

*I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the Keys of Hell and of Death. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the Throne stood a Lamb, as it had been slain. And he came and took the Book out of the Right Hand of him,—that sat upon the Throne. Thou art worthy to take the Book, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God,—by thy Blood. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and G'ory, and Blessing. And every Creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power be unto him,—that sitteth upon the Throne; and unto the Lamb,—for ever and ever. Salvation to our God,—who sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb. And he was cloathed with a Vesture, dipt in Blood, and his Name is called,—The Word*



*Word of God. \* And he treadeth the Wine Press  
of the Fierceness and Wrath of Almighty God.—  
And he hath on his Vesture, and on his Thigh, a  
Name written,—King of Kings, and Lord of  
Lords.*

*Upon her Forehead was a Name written,—  
MYSTERY,—Babylon the Great, the Mo-  
ther of Harlots, and Abominations of the Earth;  
with whom the Kings of the Earth have committed  
Fornication, and the Inhabitants of the Earth have  
been made drunk with the Wine of her Fornica-  
tion.*

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